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SWEDISH LITERATURE.

DURING THE PERIOD 1865-1890.

The year 1865 may in a certain measure be said to form a landmark in Swedish literature. Important political events took place at that time, and they were not without influence upon the literature of the period. During the years 1840-1850 the "Scandinavian" idea had become more and more firmly fixed in the minds of the people. The national movements, which arose in the beginning of the century, had led to a closer study of northern antiquity; in it was rediscovered a culture that was common to the Scandinavian peoples, a common language among the various peoples—Swedes, Danes, and Norsemen—hardly showing anything more than dialectical differences, and finally a common mythology. In a word, the three nationalities rediscovered here their near kinship. The general European nationalistic movements, which became especially pronounced in the stirring year 1848 also operated toward the same result. The struggle for unification in Germany and in Italy found its analogy in the endeavors toward a Scandinavian union. In reality there was more of kinship—and is still—between Swedes, Danes and Norwegians than between *e. g.*, Pomeranians and Barbarians or between Lombards or Sicilians. The Scandinavian idea found expression first and foremost in the student conventions, where students from the various universities of the North gathered now in one country, now in another, and by speeches, song, and mutual exchange of ideas worked for the idea of fraternalization. There were also held other meetings of a general Scandinavian character as *e. g.*, by scientists and political economists, and there appear even gatherings of a wholly popular nature.

The object of the Scandinavian idea was more especially to bring about community of culture, and it accomplished a

great deal in this respect. Not only in that it gave direct expression to itself in poetry ; Swedish literature during this period shows even more immediately the influence of the poetry of the other two peoples. But the so-called 'Scandinavianism' also had a political purpose : namely, the union of the three countries into one political state. The manner in which this was to be accomplished had not yet been thought out clearly, but it was regarded as a matter of course, that the Scandinavian North was to make common cause in defense against foreign foes.

And so when war broke out in 1864 between Denmark and Prussia-Austria, the Danes expected that Sweden-Norway would hurry to their assistance. In Sweden there existed indeed among the people strong support of such policy, and a large number of volunteers hastened to place themselves under the Danish banners. But the government held back, and wisely enough, for, as became clear later, Russia would have attacked Sweden, the very moment that country should have entered actively into the Danish-German war. But this was not generally known at the time, and the Scandinavian idea received a severe blow through Sweden's neutrality. Was not all that had been said, sung and promised merely empty, meaningless words ? As a movement of ideas and sentiment, which filled the minds and directly bore fruit in literature, the Scandinavian idea was now a thing of the past. But it was not on that account dead, for since then it has been productive of many practical results, such as a common monetary system, common maritime laws, etc. And the influence which the literature of the different countries has received from one another was never greater than during the period following.

Another important event in Swedish history was that of the reform in the method of representation, made in 1865.

From time immemorial the Swedish Riksdag had been made up of four classes, the nobility, the clergy, tradesmen and peasants. The movement for liberty, which overspread Europe and appeared in pronounced form in the revolutions of 1830 and 1840, found expression in Sweden, especially from the forties, more particularly in an effort to change the method of representation, by which the legitimacy of membership in

the Riksdag which was founded on birth and official position—in the nobility and the clergy—was to cease and the representation to be made up by general elections.

This liberalism also put its stamp on much of Swedish literature during the years from 1830-1860. The rights of the individual as over against the advantages which birth, office, and social position bestow is an idea which comes to the surface everywhere, especially in the novel. Degenerate (*utlefvade*) and poorly gifted noblemen and officers, penurious and lethargic preachers, bureaucratic and selfish government officials are types which are often met with as accessory figures by the side of the hero, the man of the people, who by his own power carves his way in life and wins the beautiful heroine, who is often wealthy and of noble descent. It is the third and fourth estate, the tradesmen and the peasants, who now invade Swedish literature. And at the same time they are preparing to take over into their own hands the political power, and that is accomplished by the change in the representation which took place in 1865.

Liberalism had now gained its object, and the ideas which it had bequeathed to poetry lost their vitality. Politics became a struggle for power between the "Intelligence" party on the one side—represented by former burghers, officials and those of academic training—and on the other the rural party, the former peasantry; and the questions at issue are almost exclusively economic in their nature and therefore little suited to influence the literature. The latter therefore comes to stand apart from the struggles and the questions of the day for a decade and a half. The new generation of writers, which makes its appearance in the sixties, is inspired almost exclusively by aesthetic interests. The poetry of the period is almost all lyric, and in its nature an afterbloom of the old romanticism. It is not until the latter part of the seventies that a new tendency appears. Now new social interests have come into the foreground and these seek to call attention and give expression to themselves, the immediate demands of reality assert themselves. It is the era of the problem literature, the period of realism and naturalism.

There was also another cultural element, which had a con-

siderable influence on Swedish literature in the sixties and seventies, namely, the philosophical views which at this time became prominent in the Universities and in the conception of life among the cultured classes. The author of these new views was K. J. Boström (1797-1866), Professor of Philosophy in Upsala during the years 1842-1863. Even his predecessors, Biberg and Grubbe, had, as adherents of Kant and Fichte, laid the foundation for a philosophical system, idealistic in character, which was further developed and systematized by Boström, and influenced also in part by Plato's doctrine of ideas. The keynote of Boström's system is that true reality is spiritual, eternal and perfect, it constitutes a system or an organism of ideas or personalities in which each and every idea enters negatively or positively into all the others, just as in the numerical series every number enters into all the higher numbers and in itself includes all the lower numbers. The highest idea of personality in which thus all others enter, and which itself includes all lower ideas, is God. The world we perceive with our senses, the sensuous world, the world of phenomena, presents itself to us as something that is material, finite and imperfect ; this is due to the fact that only the absolute—God—can perceive all things as they in their reality are, and further that man conceives himself as both a rational and sensuous being. Man's mission consists in actualizing his reason, *i. e.*, in elevating himself to identity with his ideal, as this enters into God and thus realizing God's Kingdom on Earth, making the world of ideas an actuality also in all temporal relations.

It was a profoundly ideal doctrine which Boström proclaimed. It was promulgated in lectures before admiring pupils more than through published writings, and it was developed and applied by him to various domains of philosophy. Its consistent idealism contributed in a high degree to a nobler conception of life within the cultured classes of Sweden, large numbers of whom have through it freed themselves from the bondage of the doctrinal faith of the church, at the same time preserving their faith in ideals and the power of ideals. But since, according to Boström's teachings, the sensuous world was only the semblance of a world the existence of which was conditioned by our own imperfections, this doctrine was not

calculated to develop a literature which should concern itself with questions of real life. The aesthetic side was probably also the weakest part of the doctrine. Here the symptoms of Hegel-Vischer continued to prevail.

During the period from 1865-1879, there was then no political or social questions to occupy the minds and give expression to themselves in literature. A philosophical system bearing the impress of the most pronounced idealism prevailed at the Universities and in the consciousness of the cultured class. And the poets of the time sought in a more abstract manner, away from the cares, the joys and the trials of everyday life, to realize "the beautiful." Almost all the poetry of the period was lyric.

II.

Boström's philosophy left an imperishable monument in Swedish literature in Viktor Rydberg. Rydberg, to be sure, was not Boström's pupil, but he embraced his ideas and, in several respects, developed them independently. A man of great power and versatility, he exerted an influence in philosophy, the history of religion and mythology, and in the history of art and culture, and he left works in all these fields which bear the stamp of profound and comprehensive studies and of independent views ; they are characterized by an ideal spirit and masterly form.

He is everywhere the thinker who wishes to see the casual relation in the changing phenomena of life and the times, the enduring element in these changes, the power in the evolution and the goal towards which it is leading. But above all, he is the poet who knows how to formulate his profoundest thoughts into living images, eloquent in their appeal to fancy and feeling, be it in prose or poetry. And he is everywhere the master of language who fashions and moulds his sentences into an adequate, resonant and beautiful expression of the thought and image. No Swedish poet has better than he been able, in poetic form, to mould the Swedish language into such exquisite harmony and artistic expression.

Born in 1828 in Jönköping of poor parents, whom he lost

early, he was forced to struggle against need throughout all his childhood and youth. He entered Lund University in 1851 but on account of poverty he was soon obliged to give up his studies in order to earn his living as a private tutor and by occasional contributions to literary publications. In 1855 he received employment with Göteborg's *Handels och Sjöfartstidning*, the publisher of which, S. A. Hedlund, became to him a valuable friend and helper. For more than twenty years he worked here as a newspaper man. In the meantime, however, he had carried on extensive private studies. Viktor Rydberg was therefore a self-educated man, a fact which will help to explain his way of differing from writers who had had academic training, and of looking at so many things from his own point of view.

It was as a journalist that he published his first work. In *A Freebooter in the Baltic* (1857) he gives a picture from the 17th century and in *Singoalla*, sketches from the 13th century.

In 1859 appeared his most noted novel, *The Last Athenian*, a picture of the age of Julian the Apostate, portraying the struggles between ancient religion and philosophy on the one hand and christianity and the christian church on the other. Rydberg had made extensive studies in the culture of the classical world and the early history of the christian church. In plastic figures and scenes he reproduces the decay of the old world, the severely formal faith of the christian sects, their violent civil strifes over dogmas and forms, which no one understood, together with the persecutions practised against each other and against the pagans, prompted by differences in faith and the desire for power. Over and above them towers the neo-platonic philosopher Krysanteus, and his noble daughter Hermione, who have embodied in themselves that which was best in the ancient life and teachings, and in an exalted world-conception combined the teachings of the Greek philosophers with the myths of the pagan religion. The idea intended to be conveyed is not, however, that christianity as such is a retrograde step in history. What Rydberg attacks is only the blind faith in the letter, that intolerance and the spirit of persecution which has obscured recognition of the fact that christianity is life as well as doctrines, and that above all it is the religion of

love. For there even appears in his work a representative of the genuine christianity, a christian minister, and he and the philosopher understand one another perfectly, respect each other, and are able to work together. But both suffer a tragic defeat before the victorious barbarians of the church. The fundamental idea of the book is that tragedy of history, that an advance such as was the victory of christianity, was only gained by the rejection of that which was good in antiquity as well as that which was base, by the destruction of that noble humanism, which antiquity had created and which was not to rise again until a thousand years after its destruction, when in and through the Renaissance it was restored to humanity.

A result of Rydberg's studies in ancient philosophy and the earliest history of the christian church was likewise the treatise on *The Teachings of the Bible Relative to Christ*, published in 1862. In this work he sought to show that the teachings of the church relative to Christ such as they had been developed at the ekumenical church diets was not that of the Bible. According to the Bible Christ is not God, but man's idea in God, the perfect man, as conceived by God, the ideal man, logos, "the word," which had "become flesh." In conformity with this Rydberg denies that the doctrine of the trinity is found in the Bible. It was an ingenious attempt on the basis of the words of the Bible itself to unite christianity with Boström's philosophy. This was made possible by its kinship with neo-platonism, which also had left its impress upon the Bible. The book called forth a violent opposition, in which Rydberg maintained with great ability his right as a protestant to interpret the Bible for himself independently of church diets and confessions of faith, and in several later pamphlets he developed his views more in detail.

In the year 1873 Rydberg made a journey to Italy, where he himself beheld the remains of the old world, which he had loved so much and pictured so brilliantly, and the early christian world, which he had studied so profoundly. He devoted himself particularly to the study of art, and he published several articles on the history of art which were later issued in his *Roman Days*. Among those may be ranked particularly *The Emperors of Rome in Marble*, in which the author attempts

to determine the character of those emperors from the images of them which have been preserved in sculpture, and through investigating the written sources of their history, which in many cases he finds are not impartial, he succeeds in giving an interesting and artistic character drawing of them.

In 1876 Rydberg was appointed lecturer in Göteborg, and he then gave up his occupation as a journalist. He was now able to devote all his time to his studies and to his literary work.

In 1881 he received a call to the professorship in the History of Culture in Stockholm Academy, and in 1889 he was made professor of the Theory and History of the Fine Arts, a position which he filled until his death in 1895.

During the seventies, Rydberg had published in periodical publications several poems. These were characterized by beauty of form and depth of thought, together with classical clearness of expression. They showed that the versatile scientist and writer of novels was also a poet of high rank. In 1882 he published his first collection of *Poems*. Here he presents often in the figures of myths, the sagas and history, the eternal question of the mission and the goal of the human race and of the individual. Dissimilar world-conceptions as in *Ahasverus* and *Prometheus* are pitted against one another, and the answer he gives to these questions is that the ultimate goal is a more and more complete attainment of the eternal ideals, the true, the good, and the beautiful, a more and more sublime development of the image of God in man through the ages. This may take place through the struggle of the individual against everything that tends to suppress the ideal, the thirst for gold, self-indulgence, violence and oppression. In his second volume of poems Rydberg gives evidence of being influenced somewhat by the new movement which asserted itself in Sweden in the eighties, according to which poetry should concern itself more directly with real life. In *The New Song of the Grotto*, based on the legend of the mill *Grotti*, which ground gold for King Frode, he represents this mill as an image of industrialism which without regard to the sacrifice of blood and tears, of higher humanity, merely seeks to transform society into a gold-mill and men into slaves who drive it, and in the process trample one another under foot.

Rydberg returned to the novel in *The Sword-Smith, Visions from the Period of the Reformation* (1891), which deals with ideas closely related to those he had embodied in *The Last Athenian*. The slavish belief in the letter of the confession of faith, with its narrow, intolerant love of power marches on victoriously, treading underfoot far-sighted humanism, true christian piety, the love of what the fore-fathers had loved and venerated ; and thereby the principal mission of the Reformation is forgotten, that of creating spiritual liberty. The underlying idea is again that an advance in history such as the Reformation was, could not be accomplished except by the loss of so much that was good, and which had been accomplished by the cultural work of preceding ages ; that, together with abuses and evils, there was rejected and destroyed so much of the best cultural fruits of the Middle Ages, that it would require the labor of centuries again to regain it.

Viktor Rydberg possessed a marked historical sense. The Old Norse asa-faith viewed the world in the image of a tree, the ash Yggdrasil, and on many of Sweden's farm-steads there stood guardian trees from generation to generation as a symbol of the life of the family, within which the estate descends by inheritance from father to son. The guardian tree and the family-tree are pictures, which the poet often employs, and he would have the human race and the family grow and develop like a tree. He is a liberal progressionist, but he desires continuity in the development, he desires evolution not revolution.

During the latter part of his life, Ryberg devoted himself to mythological investigations and published a large work under the title *Inquiries into Germanic Mythology*, in which he attempted to gather the scattered accounts of primitive Germanic myths into one grand and harmonious whole. The results at which he arrived have, however, not been accepted by other mythologists.

Viktor Rydberg exercised a profound influence on the intellectual life of Sweden. His collected works, together with his biography, have been issued by Karl Warburg ; his lectures on philosophy and the history of culture have also been published since the author's death.

III.

Swedish literature during the period from 1865-1880, is closely bound up with the members of a literary student organization which was formed in Upsala in 1860, called N. S., that is, *Namnlösa Sällskapet* (the nameless society). The young Norwegian, Lorenz Dietrichson, for whom there had been no opening in Christiania University, and who had been appointed *docent* in Upsala, became the leader of the society. This organization actively opposed the influence which Tegner's metaphorical style still exerted on Swedish poetry, and the romantic flight to remote ages and the world of legend and fancy. They held that a poet should picture reality, but, to be sure, a beautiful and idealized reality. As pattern to be copied they set up especially the Swedish-Finnish poet, J. L. Runeberg.

Although they were students in the University where Boström himself labored as a teacher, some of the members of the society did not in all things accept his philosophy, which designated the reality which they wished to portray as unreality. But the idealistic world-conception which characterized them all is probably to be traced to his influence. Nevertheless, Boström had several pupils among the members of N. S. Among them Carl von Bergen, a prominent lecturer and writer on the philosophy of religion, Daniel Klockhoff, a promising investigator in philosophy and a lyric poet who died young, and particularly Pontus Wikner. The last was *docent* in Upsala University where, through his noble personality, he exerted a great influence on several generations of students. In his own development of Boström's teachings he laid special stress on the religious element. He failed, however, to secure a foothold for himself at the University on account of opposition on the part of Boström's faithful disciples. Broken in health he was later called to a professorship in Christiania. Besides his philosophical writings he also published several popular works and stories marked by an elevated tone and a classic form. In spirit he stands nearest to Viktor Rydberg among Swedish writers.

Of the poets of this circle Ernst Björck, a promising writer, died young ; P. A. Gödecke, produced an excellent translation

of the Poetic Edda from Old Icelandic ; Edward Bäckström, who died as editor of home and foreign news, became a lyric poet of high rank. He also wrote dramas, of which the comedy *Eve's Sisters*, and the tragedy *Dagvard Frey* are the best known ; C. R. Nyblom made excellent translations of a number of lyric poems from various literatures and published studies on the history of literature and art ; N. P. Ödman was the humorist of the society. He wrote in a humorous vein both in poetry and prose ; C. D. af Wirson, the romantist of the society, established a name for himself both as poet and critic and as literary historian. He has been for many years and still is secretary of the Swedish Academy. His first poems are characterized by excellence of form and a certain youthful vigor. He was most successful in his use of saga material. A christian-religious trait appeared more and more in his poems, which at last assumed a more conventional character. His position made him the legitimate poet on festive occasions of official nature. As critic he opposed with much severity the movement which penetrated Swedish literature about 1880. The most gifted poet among the members of N. S. was, however, Count Carl Snoilsky, one of the most prominent of Swedish lyricists during the 19th century. He had published his first collection of poetry as early as 1861, at the age of twenty, and before he became a member of the society, and in 1862 he issued a new collection. Neither of these evinced any special originality, but they foreshadowed the future master especially in technique. In these and in other works which he published during the first half of the sixties he gave fervent expression to the political ideals, which inspired the literature of the immediately preceding decades. In *Rouget de l'Isle* he celebrates the author of the Marseillaise. In 1863 Poland had rebelled against Russia and was fighting its last desperate battle against a superior force, a battle which was watched with the liveliest sympathy in Sweden. In several songs to Poland Snoilsky gave vent to his sympathy. And finally he dedicates poems full of poetic fervor to Denmark, which was engaged in a war with Germany in 1864-65. Snoilsky was, as nearly all Swedes at the time, a Scandinavianist. He had participated in a convention of Scandinavian students in Copenhagen, and had there formed several friendships with

Danes, in particular with the Danish poet Christian Winther. The latter's poetry later also had a definite influence upon Snoilsky's, especially by making it less abstract, more personal and direct.

Snoilsky's lyric blossoms forth in all its splendor in *Italian Pictures* (1865), impressions from a journey to Italy in 1864-1865. The *Introductory Song* represents in exquisite manner the character of these poems :

Jag bringar drufvor, jag bringar rosor,
jag skänker i af mitt unge vin ;
på alla stigar, på alla kosor
jag slår den ljudande tamburin.
Jag trötter ingen utöfver höfva
med tomma foster från drömmars hem ;
jag sjunger endast hvad jag fått pröva
med mina sinnen, de sunda fem.

I moget kloke, I öfversluge,
Er har jag föga att bjuda på !
Du varma hjärta på tre och tjuge,
du vet jag säkert skall mig förstå.

They are portraits from actual life, from the peaceful and picturesque life of the Italian people, under the warm Italian sky, which revealed a wholly new world of joyous life and care-free happiness to the young poet, who had just come from the cold and gloomy north, to the youth who from the study and lecture rooms of the University had suddenly come out into life. He is not concerned in the study and cultural history of Italy. It is his old love for popular liberty and struggle for union which dominates him. In evident allusion to Garibaldi he sings :

Af gamla vaser i guld och lera,
hvad stort, hvad nyttigt har du väl lärt ?
Det simpla svärdet uppå Caprera
är tusen gånger så mycket värdt.

As he stands on the spot where stood " Nero's golden house " it is to him merely a " hill, a heap of dust from which to view the landscape." He anticipates a new day for Italy in the prophecy that :

I morgon lämnar Sankt Peter
 med suckan sin Vatikan.
 Kring all naturen det heter :
 Nu vaknar den store Pan !

And he wishes to sweep away "the stupid figure from the column of Troy" and "erect another with a cap of Phrygian cut."

This collection of poems was followed by poems written during a journey in Spain. These are not characterized by quite the same direct and overflowing spirit, are more reflective ; they are, nevertheless, gems of the highest art. He employs here the sonnet in which he became the greatest master in the Swedish language.

In the next volume of poems Snoilsky published, *Sonnets* (1871), he appears somewhat changed. These poems are all masterly in form, but there is something peculiarly literary about them. That impulsive directness of giving expression to his feelings is no longer present, even though a poem here and there betrays the anguish within, which he would conceal. Significant is the sonnet *Noli me tangere*, in which occur the lines :

Jag torgför ej mitt hjärtas lust ock kval
 Att skrynklas ned af obekanta händer.
 Min fantasi dig bjerta lekverk sänder,
 Men känslans helgedom hålls aldrig fal.

Snoilsky had chosen the profession of diplomacy ; after having served in the embassies of Paris and Copenhagen, he became secretary and soon after, chief of the Bureau of Foreign Affairs in Stockholm. He had also married a woman of aristocratic family and seemed to have left for good the field of literature. His leisure hours he devoted to numismatics and bibliognosy.

In the spring of 1879 an event occurred which created something of a sensation. Count Snoilsky resigned his position, left his home, his country, secured a divorce from his wife, and settled down in a foreign country. His personal connections had become intolerable to him, and he obeyed what seemed to him a call to return to literature. He remarried and began again to write poetry. In 1881 appeared a new collec-

tion of *Poems* ; this was followed by others in 1883, 1887 and finally 1897. The poet had now returned to his native country, where he was appointed in 1890 chief librarian of the Royal Library.

This last period of Snoilsky's lyrics is distinguished by poise and maturity of content. Many of the poems are narrative, others are descriptive of nature and life, in most cases they are combined with an ingenious thought or some experience in life. A fervent but restrained feeling, musical, expressive language, where every word is adequate, together with a marvellous harmony of verse are all characteristic of these poems ; Snoilsky was exacting in his criticism of his own poems ; he did not publish anything which he did not himself regard as satisfying the requirements in every way. After his death (1903) his biographer, Karl Warburg, has published several poems, rejected by himself, which seem little inferior to those he himself had published.

Two classes of poems are especially to be noted in these collections. The one is the group which he himself called *Swedish Portraits*. The love of his native country early received expression in his poetry and became a distinguishing feature of it. Also in his *Italian Pictures* his thought turns back with longing to the home he had left ; and in his *Sonnets* he criticises severely that indifference to the welfare and security of Sweden, which seemed to obtain at the time they originated. Afterward, when he went into voluntary exile, his best thought remained with his own country, his own people and their history. In persons and scenes he has given us living and enduring portraits from the various periods of Swedish history, even from that of "Old King Gösta," Gustavus Vasa, the liberator and reformer, and down to Esaias Tegnér. It is ordinarily, however, not the figures which stand in the foreground of history that he portrays ; it is generally the common man, the workman, the peasant or a type of the middle-class, introduced into an action or a scene, showing how history in its grand outlines influences and is itself reflected in the weal or the woe of the individual. But in all these pictures it is not only the lines that are Swedish but they contain a connected flow of feeling

for and conception of that which has been peculiarly Swedish in the changes of time.

Another group of poems indicate how the poet was influenced by the movements of the time, which entered into Swedish literature, especially about 1880. It was more particularly the labor-movement which awakened Snoilsky's sympathy. A realization of the responsibility which attaches to the more fortunate members of society, who enjoy the benefits of culture, in their relation to the workman, whose labor creates these benefits, of which he himself may enjoy only a humble share, and in their relation to the poor who by hard work, are only able to gain the necessities of life,—this is the feeling which has inspired some of the best and most beautiful in these collections. Among these is *Aphrodite and the Grinder*, the writing of which was prompted by two statues in the Dresden Art Gallery, and in which he contrasts the life devoted to the pursuits of the beautiful with that of the slave with his face turned to the soil. In another poem entitled *In the Porcelain Factory*, the plain white glazed plate which, "frambär kraftigt hvardagsbröd till tjänst för hunger, ej för öfverflöd" is valued more highly than the finished work of art made of porcelain. And he gives expression to the wish that he

. kunde gifva dikten så
den enkla form, som tusende förstå,
den form, som frambär kraftigt hvardagsbröd
till tjänst för hunger, ej för öfverflöd.

And finally the poet exclaims :

O tänk, att bilda i en lycklig stund
den bågare, som anstår hvar mans mund,
som fylls vid tidens djupa brunn en gång
för tusenden, som törsta efter sång.

In a measure Snoilsky succeeded in becoming such a poet of the people. His *Swedish Portraits* is now read in all the schools of Sweden.

HANS EMIL LARSSON.

MALMÖ, SWEDEN.
